

Bible Study 31 – Acts 9:19-25 – Saul proclaims Jesus, the Son of God

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. 20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” 21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?” 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. 23 When many days had passed, the Jew plotted to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, 25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

1. Saul participated in the worship and witness of the church at Damascus: For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.

a) By faith in Jesus shown in profession and baptism Saul became part of the church. And like those in Acts 2 who believed the gospel on Pentecost Sunday he devoted himself to the apostles teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer... I’m mindful of Cyprian’s famous dictum that those who have God for their Father, also have the church for their mother... And although Saul’s (Paul) call is to the missionary life, he will repeatedly emphasise and practice the importance of the collective communion of the church in Christ... Disciples not only follow Jesus, but they fellowship in Jesus, sharing in their gifts and graces... There is a sense of being AND belonging...

b) And so, Saul fellowshiped with fellow Christians at Damascus – the very people that when he left Jerusalem he was determined to persecute and prosecute simply for their love of the Lord Jesus. But now he has joined their ranks for Love’s sake. They are now family and friends in Christ...

c) Saul understood that his future lay elsewhere but while in Damascus he worked and witnessed for the blessing and building of Christ’s church and kingdom of love in that locality....

2. Saul preached Jesus Christ, the Son of God: And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

a) Saul’s ministry was Christ-centred. His focus was on the person and work of Jesus. He is The Gospel, the Good News that the church believes and boldly proclaims. Hence, Paul will later write to the Corinthians: And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1Cor.2:1-2). For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1Cor.1:21-24).

b) Saul’s mission was to proclaim Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to Jew and Gentile alike... And so, he began in the synagogue with his fellow Jews, whom he knew and loved and desired to see coming to faith in Jesus, as God and the Messiah promised in the Old Testament scriptures...

c) Saul’s message communicated not only the humanity of Jesus, the Christ, but also his divinity, as the only begotten Son of the Father... the very thing that he later described as a stumbling block to many Jews... There is no soft sell. There is no avoidance because the person and work of Jesus is the heart of the gospel he proclaims...

3. Saul’s transformation perplexes his audience: And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?”

- a) Saul's hearers are astonished at his about-face. The very Jesus whose followers he persecuted, he is now proclaiming as Son of God and Saviour of the world...
 - b) Saul's hearers are aware of his past persecution and fanatical opposition to the Christian faith... and of his zeal for Judaism...
 - c) Saul's hearers are arguably suspicious or sceptical about his true purpose in proclaiming Christ...
4. Saul persisted in the proclamation of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God: But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.
- a) Saul grew in competency and confidence... by continuing in the ministry of the word...
 - b) Saul confounded the non-Christian Jews by his continuing words and works...
 - c) Saul convincingly sought to show that Jesus was the Christ – God Messiah, his appointed and anointed Prophet, Priest, and King foretold in word, symbol, and type throughout the Old Testament scriptures...
5. Saul is persecuted for preaching Jesus Christ: When many days had passed, the Jew plotted to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, 25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.
- a) Saul's ministry incited some of the Jews who conspired to kill him...
 - b) Saul was alerted to their murderous intentions....
 - c) Saul was inconspicuously smuggled out of the city by fellow disciples...

Questions

1. What role does the church play in the Christian life?
2. Who or what should be at the heart of our Christian ministry, mission, and message?
3. Why is Christ's gospel controversial?
4. What place do conviction, confidence, commitment, and courage have in the Christian life and witness?